

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Blue Engine

Application ID: 13AC145894

Program Name: Blue Engine

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- (+) The applicant includes a direct, straightforward, and clear explanation of the problem their program seeks to address by using examples, relevant data, multiple sources of data, and linking to future educational opportunities. The problems identified included high remediation and low completion rates of HS by students in the target location.
- (+) The applicant provides persuasive evidence that the high numbers of students enrolled in remedial courses and the likelihood of them not being a college completer demonstrates the extent/severity of the need.
- (+) The applicant identifies the need for the program. The applicant provides evidence to document the extent and severity of the need. The applicant provides federal data to demonstrate that students in the target population lack the necessary skills to succeed in college.
- (+) The applicant clearly describes and documents the need for gateway skills and habits of mind students need to succeed in higher education, describes (literally) the costs of not addressing this need, and then documents the extent/severity of this need both at the national level and in the targeted community.
- (+) The applicant clearly describes the students who will be served (grades 8-10 in public schools serving low-income minority students) and describes the academic performance and demographic criteria used to select the schools where services will be provided.
- (+) The applicant provides a thorough description of the three primary programmatic activities for which they are requesting 45 CMs.
- (+) The applicant provides a clear statement that Members will support key instructional strategies as teacher assistants. Members will conduct activities such as re-teaching material covered, providing opportunities for students to practice information taught, serving with students to improve social skills, and supporting after school activities.
- (+) The applicant identifies three program components delivered by Members that will provide consistent, cost-effective interventions to students.

- (+) The applicant clearly describes how the 45 full time Members will provide small group instruction, social cognitive curriculum and afterschool programming after completing four weeks of training.
- (+) Members serving in teams of 3-4 to provide small group instruction during regularly scheduled class periods will reduce instructor-to-student ratios at these times to as low as 1:6.
- (+) The applicant provides substantial and specific evidence for each of the three programmatic activities; for example, citing college outcomes by linking to high school test scores for SATs and GPAs and citing a Harvard study of the application of high-dose tutoring in middle school.
- (+) The applicant provides a clear explanation as to how the program's impact will be measured and reported on an annual basis. The applicant's preparation to employ the services of an evaluation consultant to analyze student achievement, to acquire data through primary sources as available, and to administer and analyze results from ACT testing system represents a comprehensive plan to measure impact.
- (+) The applicant provides detailed information concerning how the performance targets were determined. The applicant established a logical alignment between the interventions and the desired outcomes (program completion, performance above predicted scores on the end-of-year assessments, and increased engagement in schools).
- (+) The applicant has a cohesive plan for evaluating the program, including tools for measurement, schedule and form.
- (+) The applicant's objectives are measureable. The applicant provides data to support how the objectives will be measured. The applicant outlines what data will be collected to identify the success of the AmeriCorps program.
- (+) The applicant cites research and describes their own previous experience to support their choice of proven social and cognitive interventions as aligned with a theory of change both evidence-based and evidence informed.
- (+) The applicant clearly describes the measurable results of their previous service in schools, the changes they intend to measure each year, and the overall change they expect to see at the end of the three-year grant cycle. They already have a system in place to follow up with participants after they leave high school to get information needed to assess long-term results.
- (-) Members do not recruit or manage volunteers. This is instead done by a Development Associate.
- (-) The applicant provides insufficient details of the AmeriCorps' daily activities that will prepare students to succeed in college.
- (-) The applicant does not identify the four partner high schools. Without this information, the applicant is unable to identify need or document need for this specific community.
- (-) The applicant states that the impact of services provided by the AmeriCorps members will result in improved academic performance in literacy and math, classroom engagement, and intrinsic motivation but does not provide

evidence to support the predictions and expectations.